

What is claimed is:

1. In a television broadcast system having a central location connected to a downstream network constructed to carry video signals and selectively distribute said video signals to a plurality of addressable terminals
5 connected thereto, wherein each said addressable terminal is constructed to selectively display said video signal on a television screen, operating in conjunction with a messaging server constructed to store and forward messages, and an upstream network capable of delivering user input signals from a remote location to said central location, an apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages, comprising:
10 a television messaging gateway having:
a message control interface coupled to said messaging server for controlling at least one message therein, said message having address information associated therewith, to associate said message with at least one user;
a video output module coupled to said downstream network for generating video signals
15 corresponding to said message, for display on a television set coupled to said addressable terminal;
and,
logic to direct said message between said message receiving interface and said video output module;
logic for converting said messages into a format suitable for display on a TV screen.
2. An apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages as in claim 1 wherein said gateway further
20 includes an input device interface connected to said upstream network for receiving user input signals.
3. An apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages as in claim 2 wherein said logic is further constructed to interactively respond to said user input signals, and selectively direct messages to an addressable terminal associated with a user.
4. An apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages as in claim 2 wherein said television
25 messaging gateway further comprises storage means to store a plurality of said messages and the addressing information associated therewith.
5. An apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages as in claim 2 wherein said user input signals include a password, before messages corresponding with said user are fed into said downstream network.
- 30 6. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 2 wherein said television messaging gateway further comprises a user interface module, responsive to user input signals and constructed to cause generation of video signals to display data corresponding to the type and number of messages directed to a user, and to facilitate user selection of messages to be directed to said addressable terminal.

7. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 2 wherein said input device interface comprises a telephony interface.
8. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 7 wherein said user input signals are inputted using a telephone.
- 5 9. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 2 wherein said television messaging gateway also comprises receiver means to receive user generated messages.
10. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 2 wherein said upstream network is a telephony network, a bi-directional television distribution network, a wireless network, a dedicated wire network and a combination thereof.
- 10 11. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 2 wherein said user input signals are telephony input, touch tone signals input, voice input, remote control device input, pointing device input, keyboard input or a combination thereof.
12. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 2 wherein said upstream network is a bi-directional television distribution network and wherein said addressable terminal is adapted to send user input signals to said television messaging gateway via said upstream network.
- 15 13. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 2 wherein said input device interface further comprises a speech recognition module and wherein said user input signals are voice signals.
14. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 13 wherein said addressable terminal is adapted to receive user voice input commands, and transmit said commands to said input device interface.
- 20 15. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 14 wherein said addressable terminal is further adapted to translate voice commands into tokens, and wherein said tokens being transmitted to said input device interface.
- 25 16. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 2 wherein said television messaging gateway is coupled to an IP based network for receiving messages and user input therethrough.
17. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 2 further comprising a remote control unit in communication with said addressable terminal, and wherein keystrokes on keys in said remote control unit are used as input to said user input device interface.
- 30 18. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 2 further comprising:
a remote control unit having a microphone coupled thereto, wherein said microphone is constructed to receive sound energy and transform it to an audio signal ; and
wherein said remote control unit is constructed communicate a signal corresponding

to said audio signal to said addressable terminal.

19. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 2 wherein said television messaging gateway is integrated into said addressable terminal.

20. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 2 wherein said television messaging gateway further comprises at least a local module and a centralized module, and wherein said local module is implemented in at least a portion of said addressable terminal.

21. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 20 wherein said local module further comprises:

a reception module for receiving at least one message from said centralized module;

a displaying module for displaying said message on said television set; and,

an input reception module for receiving user input.

22. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 20 wherein said addressable terminal further comprises a message storage device and wherein said local module is adapted to store messages in said message storage device.

23. An apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages as in claim 1 wherein said logic is constructed to direct said message to an addressable terminal associated with said address information.

24. An apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages as in claim 23 wherein user input signals are used to identify and select an addressable terminal to direct messages to.

25. An apparatus for selecting and displaying multi media messages as in claim 1 wherein said logic is further constructed to display a list of messages available for a specific user, to enable said user to select at least one message of said list for display.

26. An apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages as in claim 1 wherein said television messaging gateway further comprises means for notification of receipt of a message.

27. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 1 wherein said messages are of a type selected from audio messages, video messages, fax messages, text messages, multi-media messages, and e-mail messages.

28. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 1 wherein said downstream network is a cable television network, a satellite television network, a terrestrial video distribution network, a radio frequency video distribution network, a cellular network, a hybrid network, direct cable connection, or a combination thereof

29. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 1 wherein said television messaging gateway utilizes a television speaker as an output device.

30. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 1 wherein said video signals comprises digital video signals and wherein said downstream network is constructed to transmit digital video signals and addressing information to address selected signals to a selected addressable terminal.

31. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 1 wherein said messaging server is also adapted to receive e-mail messages.

32. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 1 wherein said television messaging gateway is integral to said messaging server.

33. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 1 wherein said television messaging gateway is located remotely from said messaging server.

34. In a television broadcast system having a central location connected to a downstream network constructed to carry video signals and selectively distribute said video signals to a plurality of addressable terminals connected thereto, wherein said addressable terminal is constructed to selectively display said video signal on a television screen, operating in conjunction with a messaging server constructed to store and forward messages, and an upstream network capable of delivering user input signals from a remote location to said central location, an apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages comprising:

a television messaging gateway having:

a message receiving interface coupled to said messaging server for receiving at least one message therefrom, said message having address information associated therewith, to associate said message with a user;

a video output module coupled to said downstream network for generating video signals corresponding to said message, for display on a television set coupled to said addressable terminal; logic to direct messages between said message receiving interface and said video output module; an input device interface connected to said upstream network for receiving user input signals; a storage device to store a database to correlate said addressing information with a specific user and addressable terminal;

Logic for converting said messages into a format suitable for display on a TV screen;

and,

wherein said messages are interactively displayed on a television screen coupled to said addressable terminal in response to user input signals entered by a user input device.

35. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 34 wherein said input device interface comprises a telephony network and said input device comprises a telephone interface.

36. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 34 wherein said upstream network and said downstream network comprises a bi-directional television distribution network, and wherein said input device interface is coupled to said bi-directional network for receiving user input

signals therethrough.

37. The apparatus for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 34 wherein said user input signals correspond to human voice commands.

38. A method for remote viewing of selected messages at a user remote receiving location comprising the steps of:

coupling a television messaging gateway to a television set;
coupling at least one messaging server to the television messaging gateway; and
causing said television messaging gateway to provide messages received in said messaging server to said television set in a format suitable for audio-visual display thereon.

39. The method according to claim 38, wherein said step of causing includes inputting user commands to the gateway.

40. The method according to claim 38, further including the step of displaying at least a portion of said messages using video generation techniques.

41. The method according to claim 38, wherein said messaging server is an e-mail server, and further comprising the steps of creating and sending an e-mail message by voice via said television messaging gateway.

42. In a television broadcast system having a central location having at least one video source connected to a downstream network constructed to carry video signals and selectively distribute said video signals to a plurality of addressable terminals connected thereto, wherein said addressable terminal is constructed to selectively receive and display said video signal on a television screen, a messaging server constructed to store and forward messages, a and an upstream network capable of delivering user input signals from a remote location to said central location, a method for selecting and displaying multi-media messages, comprising the steps of:

Receiving and storing a plurality of messages directed to a particular user;
converting said messages to video signals; and,
selectively transmitting said video signals to a particular television set associated with said particular user for outputting said message therewith.

43. The method for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 42 further comprising the steps of:
receiving user input signals via said upstream network;
selecting one or more messages in accordance to said user input signals; and,
converting said messages into video signals for output by said television set.

44. The method for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 42 further comprising the step of entering user outgoing messages via said upstream network.

45. A method for selecting and displaying multi-media messages, comprising the steps of:

receiving and storing in a messaging server a plurality of messages directed to a particular user;
generating message management information screens corresponding to said plurality of messages,
and displaying said screens on a selected television set associated with said particular user;
5 receiving user input signals to direct a television messaging gateway to select at least one message
for display; and,
converting said message to audio-visual television signals for outputting by said television set.

46. The method for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 45 wherein said step of converting
is performed by an addressable terminal physically located in proximity to said television set.

10 47. The method for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 45 wherein said step of converting
is performed by said television messaging gateway physically located remotely to said television set.

48. The method for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 45 wherein said step of generating
is performed by an addressable terminal physically located in proximity to said television set.

15 49. The method for selecting and displaying multi-media messages of claim 45 wherein said step of generating
is performed by a module of said television messaging gateway physically located remotely to said
television set.

50. A method for selecting and displaying multi-media messages comprising the steps of:

receiving messages from a telecom network;
storing said messages in a unified messaging storage;
20 coupling said unified messaging storage to a television messaging gateway; and,
selectively outputting said messages via said messaging gateway to a television set.

51. A computer readable media containing software that when executed by a computer will cause said computer
to substantially perform as the television messaging server of claim 1.

52. Apparatus for remote viewing of selected messages at a user remote receiving location comprising:

25 a television messaging gateway coupled to a television set;

at least one messaging server coupled to the television messaging gateway; and

logic for causing said television messaging gateway to provide messages received in said messaging
server to said television set in a format suitable for audio-visual display thereon.

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